

MINUTES of the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 28 April 2011 at 7.00pm.

Present:	Councillors Angie Gaywood (Chair), Cathy Kent, Diane Revell (Substituting for Cllr Prevost) and Sue MacPherson
Additional Members:	Mr S Cray – Parent/Governor Representative Mr A McPherson – Parent/Governor Representative Rev D Rollins – C of E Representative Mrs P Wilson – RC Church Representative (till 7.30 pm)
Apologies:	Cllr A Prevost; Cllr L Carr
In attendance:	Councillor Diana Hale – Portfolio Holder for Education (until 8.30 pm) Ms J Olsson – Corporate Director, Children, Education and Families (CEF) Ms J Mayer - Democratic Services Officer Mr A Pike – Chief Executive, SW & SE Essex PCT Mr S McArthur – Deputy Director/Deputy Chief Nurse – Children, Young People and Maternity Services (SW Essex PC) Dr Neel Bhaduri – Public Health Commissioning Manager

38. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

a) Interests

Councillor Kent declared a personal interest as she has children attending St. Thomas of Canterbury School, Grays Convent School and Grays Media Art College. She is also a Parent Governor at Grays Convent School, a member of the Fire Authority and a member of Thurrock's Admissions Forum.

Councillor Gaywood declared a personal interest as she has children attending Arthur Bugler Junior School, St. Clere's School and Palmers College. She is a Governor at Arthur Bugler Infant School; she has a disabled son in receipt of special care and is the Chair of the East Tilbury and St. Clere's Schools Collaboration Group. She is an SEN Parent Governor at St. Clere's School and a member of Thurrock CVS. She is a member of the Corporate Parenting Group and a parent member of Thurrock Family Voice.

Councillor MacPherson declared a personal interest as she has children attending Chafford Hundred Campus and Tudor Court and

they also attend an after school club. She hires facilities to William Edwards School and is a member of the Fire Authority.

Mr S Cray declared a personal interest as he is a Parent Governor at St Clere's. He has a child attending St Clere's School and is a member of the East Tilbury School Collaboration Committee.

Reverend Rollins declared a personal interest as he is a Governor at Corringham Primary.

Mr A McPherson declared a personal interest as he is a Parent Governor at Aveley Primary.

Mrs P Wilson declared a personal interest as the Chair of Governors at St Thomas's Primary.

b) Whipping

No interests were declared.

39. MINUTES

The Minutes from the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on 3 February 2011, were approved as a correct record.

40. CHILDRENS' HEALTH ISSUES – A presentation by Mr Stewart McArthur, Deputy Director/Deputy Chief Nurse, Children, Young People and Maternity Services

A copy of Mr McArthur's slides can be found at Appendix A to these minutes.

In responding to questions from members, Mr Pike explained the situation in respect of the Orthodontist who will no longer providing NHS services in Grays. Members noted that this is a highly specialised field of dentistry but other services are available in Brentwood, Basildon and Romford. All treatments which had started in Grays would be fully transferrable. Mr Pike advised that he would be running a new procurement at the end of 2012. By this time, other existing contracts would be winding down and a new National Contract will have been negotiated. Mr Pike remained hopeful for an interest in Thurrock.

In respect of a question about low levels of breast-feeding in Thurrock, Mr Pike explained that some GPs do not submit enough data and it was often inconsistent. However, levels in Thurrock were generally at 25%, whereas some parts of the country are as high as 50%.

Thurrock's new target is to reach 32% and all health care professionals would be expected to work together to achieve this. Childrens' Centres promoted breastfeeding, with mentoring support from mothers. Members also felt that it was important to avoid pressurising new mothers, at such a vulnerable stage in their lives.

In order to improve data collection the new form which GPs are required to submit, at a baby's 6-8 week check up, will not load onto the system unless the section on breastfeeding has been completed correctly.

The Chair asked about the progress of the new GP's Consortium and any challenges envisaged. Mr McArthur was confident that the new Consortium would enthuse and engage local GPs and capture all their specialisms. The Director advised that there was room for challenge and debate, as to what was required both locally and in wider Essex, and a good level of joint commissioning would provide this.

In response to questions about savings proposals, Mr Pike advised that these would be taken to the next meeting of the Childrens' Partnership Board. The Childrens' Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee would receive a detailed report at its next meeting. In the interim, Mr Pike would be re-aligning service delivery, in order to cut waste and duplication and avoid needless reviews and referrals. The Director confirmed that her directorate were mirroring this good practice by working in partnership with schools and health professionals.

Members then discussed the challenges in supporting young people with learning disabilities into adult services. The Chair also welcomed parents from the 'STARS' group to the public gallery.

Members noted that the PCT had a specialist Occupational Therapist for autism and waiting times were currently 18 weeks from referral. The Chair asked about the risks and opportunities for the Special Educational Needs Green Paper. Mr McArthur advised that national pilots had worked well and Thurrock would seek to widen choices for parents. In responding to a question about 'Aiming High' funding; Mr McArthur explained that last year's funding had been spent on a range of short breaks and was in place again this year.

41. TACKLING CHILDHOOD OBESITY

Doctor Neel Bhaduri (Public Health and Commissioning Manager – SW Essex PCT) delivered this presentation, which can be found at Appendix B to these minutes. Members were asked to note that this presentation provided members with an early overview. It was still a work in progress and had not been to the Partnership Board.

Mr Pike commented that the figures were roughly the same as last year, with no further deterioration, so this was encouraging.

There was some discussion about initiatives in schools, such as healthy cooking clubs, targeted at those schools with the greatest prevalence of Year 6 Obesity. The Playground Project had been introduced to encourage more activity at schools and a recent evaluation had shown an increase in activity amongst girls.

Members asked whether a half hour lunch break was long enough; i.e. to consume a healthy meal, combined with some level of activity. The Education Officer advised that this can be challenging for some schools, given the limited time available. There are also peaks and troughs in the school year in relation to packed lunches; with take-up generally higher in the Summer.

Dr Bhadhuri advised members of the 'HENRY' programme, which places an obligation on all health care professionals to promote breast feeding and good eating habits in early life. Members noted the success of the Healthy Schools in Thurrock Programme. In 2013 this would transfer to the Local Authority as a public health function. The full results of the pilot study into secondary school obesity would be shared with a future meeting of Children's Services O&S.

There was some discussion about working with Thurrock planning officers; to avoid large concentrations of take-away restaurants in certain areas. However, one member expressed a view that we should not lose sight of personal responsibility about portion sizes and the frequency of eating fast food.

42. CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY

The Corporate Director presented this report, which advised Overview and Scrutiny of the Thurrock Child Poverty Strategy and needs analysis. Members noted that the Strategy had been approved by Cabinet on 13 April but Overview and Scrutiny members had a role to fulfil in ensuring that the Strategy is sufficiently embedded and delivered. The Director advised that implementation of the action plan would be via the Children and Young People's Plan.

Members had received a background paper entitled; 'Childcare Sufficiency Assessment update'. Members were reminded that the Childcare Act 2006 *'requires Local Authorities to secure sufficient, sustainable and flexible childcare that is responsive to the needs of working parents in their area for children up to the age of 14 (or 17 for disabled children).'*

The recommendations in the paper would be used to inform the development of an action plan and work will commence to meet the needs identified through the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment.

There was some discussion about the 'Wishes' Programme, which was accessible via Childrens' Centres, Schools, GPs and the Adult College. The Corporate Director agreed to provide members with a briefing about the Programme, so they could promote it to their constituents.

In response to a question from the Chair about delivery, the Corporate Director drew members' attention to page 62 (7.2) of the Strategy. Under each heading the Strategy stated its objectives and concluded with a sub heading saying; *'to do this we will: '* The Director also explained how specific items within the Strategy could be tracked through service plans and individual performance plans. The Director and Heads of Service would be meeting regularly to monitor the implementation of the Plan. This would include regular meetings with responsible officers to discuss progress and delivery.

There was some discussion about the regeneration opportunities emerging in Thurrock and breaking the benefits culture.

Members noted that a lot of the funding for after school clubs and activities had been withdrawn but in many areas schools were fairly self sufficient; i.e. in the provision of homework clubs. The Director advised that the School Improvement Team work with stagnant and weak schools, to encourage after school activities which will drive up standards. The Director was also pleased to report that high expectations from governors, teachers and head teachers were raising the aspirations of parents. As a result, remarkable progress had been made in very challenging parts of Thurrock.

The Chair suggested that a Governors Training Plan come back to a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, possibly using experienced governors to deliver some of the training modules.

RESOLVED

That the Children's' Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the key strategic priorities of the Thurrock Child Poverty Strategy and the development of an action plan.

The meeting finished at 9.25

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIRMAN

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
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